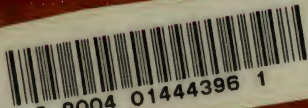


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Civil Government—the late Conspiracy;

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN KINGSTON, U. C. DECEMBER 31, 1837,

BY EGERTON RYERSON.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

*Ne, pueri, ne tanta animis assuescite bella,
Ne patriæ validas in viscera vertite vires.*

VIRGIL.

Let us be daily thankful, that in our own age and country the rights of God and man are happily united. May a guardian providence *continue* to watch over both! And may we seriously consider how impossible it is, under such a Government, to be good Christians without being good subjects, or to *fear God*, if we do not honour the King.—DODDRIDGE.

TORONTO:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

In compliance with the request of several principal persons who heard the following discourse delivered, the author has been induced to prepare it for the press,—hoping that the perusal of it may, in the present circumstances of the Province, be both interesting and useful; especially as he is not aware that any thing of the kind has appeared before the Canadian public, and as the doctrine of *civil government*—including its origin and objects, the mutual rights and duties of rulers and subjects—is, he believes, viewed in the simple light of Scripture and Reason, as also the crimes involved in the late conspiracy and the hand of God in our deliverance. The Author has, as far as the limits of an ordinary Discourse would permit, availed himself of the authorities of those Names whose praise is in all lands, and whose reasonings on this, as on other branches of Moral Science, are as rational and Scriptural as they are perspicuous and beautiful.

KINGSTON, *January 8, 1838.*

DISCOURSE.

“They shall wisely consider of his doing.”

PSALM l^{iv}. 9.

At the opening of this Psalm, the inspired King of Israel implores the Divine protection against an enemy who had plotted the destruction of his life and the subversion of his throne. In the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th verses, he describes the character and conduct of the parties to this conspiracy. In the 2nd verse, he characterises them as “*wicked*,” as “*workers of iniquity* ;”—men who, whatever might be their outward profession, were in reality void of all religious principle, and even made “*iniquity*” their occupation or trade—were “*workers*” of it. He speaks, in the same verse, of their “*secret counsel*,” and “*insurrection*.” In their “*secret counsel*,” they formed the conspiracy against the King’s life and government, and made an “*insurrection*” in order to accomplish it.

In the 4th and 5th verses, the conspirators are represented as “*whetting their tongue like a sword*,” as “*bending their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words*.” “*Whetting the tongue like a sword*,” may signify a malevolent preparation of the most provoking, defamatory, and injurious scandal and sedition, as a soldier whets his sword that he may the better destroy his enemies.—Their “*bitter words*,” are compared to *poisonous arrows*—deadly in their nature and intent. These “*arrows*” they shoot “*in secret*” and “*suddenly*”—in the dark and by surprise, where no fear is apprehended because no danger is seen.

The royal Prophet next states the manner in which his enemies emboldened each other in, and matured their treasonable designs.—“*They encourage themselves in an evil matter* ;” perhaps by boasting of their union, and numbers, and courage, and the weakness and defencelessness of their adversaries ; perhaps also by dwelling upon the honour, and power, and booty they would acquire, and the gratification they would experience in wreaking their vengeance against the property and lives of odious individuals. They privily plot their schemes, and mutually pledging themselves to secrecy, suppose their plans to be

perfectly secure from detection ; or, in the Psalmist's own words, "*they commune of laying snares privily: they say, 'Who shall see them?'*"

In order to weaken the influence of the authorities they have conspired to overthrow, and to exasperate their adherents against the individuals whom they have resolved to destroy, these plotters are represented as diligently and minutely investigating, and publishing, and magnifying the errors, and foibles and sins of their hated rulers. "*They search out iniquities*; (probably under the names of abuses, oppressions, &c.,—a patriotic and indispensable duty on some occasions and with right objects in view;) "*they accomplish a diligent search.*" But in all this they are meditating an ulterior, a dark, a deep design. "*Both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.*"

Such is the representation which the King of Israel gives of the plot which had been formed against his life and government, and the manner in which its authors had pursued their wicked designs. In the 7th and 8th verses, he predicts the certainty and manner of their defeat. By a special interposition of Divine Providence, their plans would be suddenly frustrated, and they would be disabled and overthrown. "*God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded*"—wounded in their prospects, hopes, and expectations, as well as in their power, if not in their persons.—In the 8th verse, these "workers of iniquity" are represented, after their sudden overthrow, as revealing their own secret counsels and plottings, either by becoming what we call "King's evidence," or by a frank confession of their own folly and wickedness. "*So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves.*"—It is also intimated that many kindred spirits, who were privy to the plot, but who were not wounded or taken in it, perceiving the danger and ruin of their compatriots in guilt, would elude the impending evil, either by secreting themselves, or by mingling with other classes of the community, or by escaping from the country altogether. "*All that see them shall flee away.*"

How far this Psalm, from the 2nd to the 8th verse inclusive, presents a true portrait of recent events in these Provinces, I leave to your good sense and intelligence to determine. In the two last (9th and 10th) verses of the Psalm, we are reminded of the effect which a review of such events ought to have on every observer, especially every true Christian. "*And all men shall fear*"—shall recoil from following so wicked an example, and dread the frowns of the Divine displeasure; "*and shall declare the work of God*"—shall acknowledge, on the one

hand, his goodness in the deliverance, and his judgment on the other ;
 “for they shall wisely consider of his doing. The righteous shall be
 glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him ; and all the upright in heart
 shall glory.”

Let us, my Friends, on the present occasion, wisely consider of God’s
 doing, in the institution of civil government itself, together with the
 duties which it involves ; and the providential preservation of that
 under which we have the happiness to live from a formidable and
 wicked conspiracy.

I. *A brief reference to the Divine wisdom and goodness in the
 institution of civil government, and the duties which it involves.**

✱ The legitimate end of civil government is the preservation and advance-
 ment of men’s civil interests, and the better security of their lives,
 liberties, and property. Without civil government of some kind, there
 would be no security against mutual invasions and injuries ; every man
 might act as his interest or his passions at the moment led him, and no
 man’s property or life would be secure for half an hour ; the posses-
 sions, liberties and lives of the weak, would be at the disposal of the
 strong ; disorder, confusion, mischiefs, murders, and ten thousand
 miseries would overspread the earth, and the human race would soon
 become extinct. So obvious is the necessity of civil government, that we
 read of no age in which it did not exist. I believe it is coeval with the

* The views maintained in the following pages are the same that the author explained and
 advocated in two essays which he published in 1831 and 1832. The one was entitled “*Obe-
 dience to Civil Government and Prayer for those in Authority*,” and published in the *Christian
 Guardian*, Oct. 8, 1831. The other was headed,—“*How far does it consist with Christian
 Submission to endeavour to remedy the evils of a Government?*” published in the *Guardian*,
 January 18, 1832. These essays were also written at a time when the author felt it his duty to
 oppose the then existing administration in its avowed determination to maintain the exclusive
 system in respect to the Clergy Reserves, for which he received no very mild treatment from
 many who now advocate, as he did then, an equitable adjustment of that question. His views
 were also, responded to, at that time, by many who have since been unconsciously led on from
 one step to another, until they now find themselves involved in the guilt and misery of detected
 conspiracy and defeated rebellion. What were the feelings of the author at that time, and what
 the views inculcated by him and his friends on the public mind in respect to the supreme govern-
 ment of the country, may be inferred from the following paragraph, which was the conclusion
 of the first of the above mentioned essays:—

“ Besides the above motives to the discharge of this duty, perhaps few Christians on the face
 of the globe have as strong inducements of another kind, as those whose lot is cast in the territo-
 ries of the *British Empire*. Blest with a Sovereign whose warmest desires and efforts centre in
 the comfort and happiness of his people—favoured with Counsellors around the Throne who
 honestly and diligently seek the weal of the nation—protected by a form of Government which
 unites freedom with energy and respectability, and, though unpretending in all its details to
 absolute perfection, yet

‘ With laws and liberties that rise,
 Man’s noblest works beneath the skies’—

we can with a willing mind and a fervent spirit pray for our distinguished of nations—

‘ O may thy wealth and power increase !
 O may thy people dwell in peace !
 On thee the ALMIGHTY’S glory rest,
 And all the world in thee be blest.’ ”

human race. The assumption that what is called a "state of nature" ever did exist in the early ages of the world, appears to be founded merely upon conjecture, and is, I think, virtually contradicted by the Mosaic records themselves. The origin of civil government is, I think, as follows: "At the beginning, there were only the children of one man, living under the care of their father. These dispersed, and became heads of their own families respectively; or many families might agree to live under one chief, or make up little governments of tribes and clans. Then disputes arose, till one stronger than the rest subdued them, and forced them to unite under him. Thus arose the large governments, which likewise contended with each other, till at length one of them swallowed up the others, and became almost universal, giving place itself after a time to a superior power. In this way succeeded each other, the empires of the Assyrians, Persians, Grecians, and Romans; out of which last, when overthrown and broken to pieces, spring the empires and kingdoms at this day subsisting in the world."

B { By the Apostle Paul, civil government is said to be "ordained of God;" by the Apostle Peter, it is called an "*ordinance of man.*" In modern language, these apparently paradoxical propositions may be expressed thus: "Civil authority or power emanates from God;" "Civil authority or power emanates from the people." Now how contradictory soever these propositions may appear, and however different the objects for which they are avowed and inculcated, rightly understood, they are both as fully recognized in Great Britain as in America; and may both be held and maintained with equal sincerity and truth by a subject of a Monarchy and a citizen of a Republic.

The *institution* of civil government is of Divine appointment; and therefore in this sense civil authority or power emanates from God; or in the language of St. Paul, is "*ordained of God.*"* But the *form*

* "The leading doctrine of Scripture is, that Government is an ordinance of God. It was manifestly his will that men should live in society; this cannot be doubted. The very laws he has given to men prescribing their relative duties, assume the permanent existence of social relations, and therefore place them under regulation. From this fact the Divine appointment of government flows as a necessary consequence. A society cannot exist without laws; and it therefore follows that such laws must be upheld by enforcement. Hence an *executive* power in some form must arise, to guard, to judge, to reward, to punish. For if there were no executors of laws, the laws would become a dead letter, which would be the same thing as having no law at all; and where there are no laws there can be no society. But we are not left to inference. In the first ages of the world, government was paternal, the power of government was vested in parents, by the express appointment of God. Among the Jews, rulers, judges, kings, were also appointed by God himself; and as for all other nations, the New Testament expressly declares, that "the powers which be are ordained of God." The origin of power is not, therefore, from man, but from God. It is not left as a matter of choice to men, whether they will submit to be governed or not; it is God's appointment that they should be subject to those powers whom he, in the government of the world, has placed over them, in all things for which he has instituted government, that is, that it should be "a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well." Nor are they at liberty "to resist the power," when employed in accomplishing such legitimate ends of government; nor to deny the right, nor to refuse the means

and *specific organization* of civil government, is subject to human regulation, and therefore, in this sense, civil authority or power may be said to emanate from the people; or in the language of St. Peter is an “*ordinance of man.*”* In Great Britain, Monarchy has existed from time immemorial, in accordance with the sentiments and ardent wishes of the Nation. And when the usurper Cromwell artfully succeeded to subvert it, the Nation soon re-established it. Afterwards the succession was changed, and the present Royal Family was placed upon the Throne by the almost unanimous voice of a grateful people, and still continues to sway the sceptre of supreme power to the more unanimous satisfaction, and in the more unanimous and cordial affections of the people, than probably any elected President of the present or any former age. This is civil government, under different forms, both “*ordained of God,*” and an “*ordinance of man.*”

“All power (says a late pious and learned Prelate of the Church of England) is originally and essentially in God; from him it descends to man. Pontius Pilate, about to pass sentence upon the innocent Jesus,

even when they have the power to do so, by which the supreme power may restrain evil; and enforce truth, righteousness, and peace. Every supreme power, we therefore conclude, is invested with full and unalienable authority to govern well; and the people of every state are bound, by the institution of God, cheerfully and thankfully to submit to be so governed.”—*Watson's Theological Institutes*, Vol. III. pp. 304, 305.

* “Although government is enjoined by God, it appears to be left to men to judge in what form its purposes may, in certain circumstances, be most effectually accomplished. No direction is given on this subject in the Scriptures. The patriarchal or family governments of the most ancient times, were founded upon nature; but when two or more families were joined under one head, either for mutual defence, or for aggression, the government was one of choice, or it resulted from a submission effected by conquest. Here, in many cases, a *compact* might, and in some instances did, come in, though differing in principle from “the social compact” of theoretical writers; and this affords the only rational way of interpreting that real social compact which in some degree or other exists in all nations. In all cases where the patriarchal government was to be raised into a government common to many families, some considerable number of persons must have determined its form, and they would have the right to place it upon such fundamental principles as might seem best, provided that such principles did not interfere with the duties made obligatory by God upon every sovereign power, and with the obligations of the subject to be governed by justice in mercy, and to be controlled from injuring others. Equally clear would be the right of the community, either *en masse*, or by their natural heads or representatives, to agree upon a body of laws, which should be the standing and published expression of the will of the supreme power, that so the sovereign will on all main questions might not be subject to constant changes and the caprice of an individual; and to oblige the sovereign, as the condition of his office, to bind himself to observe these fundamental principles and laws of the State by solemn oath, which has been the practice among many nations, and especially those of the Gothic stock. It follows from hence, that whilst there is an ordination of God as to government, prior to the establishment of all governments, there is no ordination of a particular man or men to govern, nor any investment of families with hereditary right. There is no such ordination in Scripture, and we know that none takes place by particular revelation. God “setteth up one, and putteth down another,” in virtue of his dominion over all things; but he does this through men themselves, as his controlled and often unconscious instruments. Hence by St. Peter, in perfect consistency with St. Paul, the existing governments of the world are called “ordinances of men.”—“Submit to every ordinance of man,” or to every human creation and constitution, “for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme,” &c. Again, as the wisdom to govern with absolute truth and justice, is not to be presumed to dwell in one man, however virtuous, so, in this state of things, the better to secure a salutary administration, there would be a right to make provision for this also, by Councils, Senates, Parliaments, Cortes, or similar institutions, vested with suitable powers, to forward, but not to obstruct, the exercise of good government.—And accordingly, we can trace the rudiments of these institutions in the earliest stages of most regular governments. These and similar arrangements, are left to human care, prudence, and patriotism; and they are in perfect accordance with the principles of sovereign right as laid down in Scripture.”—*Watson's Theological Institutes*, Vol. III. pp. 309—311.

was not making a due use of his power ; but even then, that power was by the innocent Jesus, recognised and allowed : ‘ Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.’—Accordingly by our Apostle we are told, ‘ There is no power but of God : the powers that be—the powers subsisting—are ordained of God.’ So far as relates to the different modes by which, in different constitutions, rulers become invested with their power—so far government is, what St. Peter styles it, ‘ an ordinance of man,’ regulated by human laws.—But when by rulers becoming so invested, government commences and is in force, it must be submitted to ‘ for the Lord’s sake ;’ not only through fear of punishment, but because God who is the great king over all the earth has commanded us, for the peace of the world and the comfort of society, to consider our governors as armed with his authority, and to be subject to them as to himself. Resistance to them will be accounted as resistance to him.”*

Such being the design of civil government, and such its origin and the ground on which it rests, let us next consider the interests and duties which arise out of its establishment. It has been well remarked by Dr. Paley, that “ the interest of the whole society is binding upon every part of it. No rule, short of this, will provide for the stability of the government, or for the peace and safety of social life.”†

The members of every civil compact are usually divided into two classes—the *rulers* and *ruled*. Both classes are, or ought to be, equally under the government of law ; both are equally entitled to its protection ; and the law is equally the rule of the magistrate’s administration and the subject’s or citizen’s obedience. Princes, governors, and magistrates are bound to extend equal and impartial protection to the lives, liberties, and properties of their subjects and fellow-men. “ In a government (says President Davies) where wisdom sits at the helm, and justice, tempered with clemency, holds the balance of retribution, liberty and property are secured,—encroaching ambition is checked,—helpless innocence is protected,—and consequently peace and happiness diffuse their streams through the land. On the other hand, when the government is entrusted in the hands of tyranny, of luxury, or rashness, there is no security for property, liberty, or life.”‡ If we take the higher ground of the Christian Scriptures, it is undoubtedly the duty of all rulers to maintain the dignity of their office, and render it “ a min-

* Bishop Horne’s Sermons, vol. ii. pp. 153, 154.

† Moral and Political Philosophy, chap. iii.

‡ Works, Vol. I., p. 261.

ister of God for good" to the community, by *personal example* as well as by official fidelity. It has indeed sometimes happened, that the official acts of a ruler have presented a happy contrast to his private example; but, at best, a Sabbath-breaking, drunken,* immoral, vicious ruler is a public calamity. Elevated like a public pageant, his conduct is visible to all, and the poison of his example penetrates far and wide. There is a natural propensity in the human mind to imitate the conduct and adopt the sentiments of those who are invested with authority. The example of the ruler, like the impulse of a stone on the yielding surface of a lake, diffuses its influence around, in concentric and gradually-enlarging circles, to an extent the eye can neither trace nor limit. Reason teaches that a man who would govern others ought to govern himself. If a ruler's own example teach rebellion against the laws of God, how can he expect obedience from others to the laws of man? His own example becomes a passport to the lawless and disobedient. Truly is it therefore observed, in the Homily of the Church of England against wilful rebellion—"In *God's Word* rulers must learn how to obey God and govern men: † in *God's Word* subjects must learn both obedience to God and their rulers."

* "In magistrates drunkenness causeth cruelty instead of justice, as that wise philosopher Plato perceived right well, when he affirmed that a drunken man hath a tyrannous heart, and will rule at his pleasure, contrary to right and reason. And certainly drunkenness maketh men forget both law and equity, which caused King Solomon so strictly to charge that no wine should be given unto rulers, lest peradventure by drinking they forget what the law appointeth them, and so change the judgment of all the children of the poor. Therefore, among all sorts of men, excessive drinking is most intolerable in a magistrate, or man of authority, as Plato saith: for a drunkard knoweth not where he is himself. If then a man of authority should be a drunkard, alas! how might he be a guide unto other men, standing in need of a governor himself."—*Homily of the Church of England against Gluttony and Drunkenness.*

† "The duties of the sovereign power, whatever its form may be, are, the enactment of just and equal laws; the impartial execution of those laws in mercy; the encouragement of religion, morality, learning, and industry; the protection and sustenance of the poor and helpless; the maintenance of domestic peace and peace with all nations; the faithful observance of all treaties; an incessant application to the cares of government, without exacting more tribute from the people than is necessary for the real wants of the state, and the honourable maintenance of its officers; the appointment of inferior magistrates of probity and fitness, with a diligent and strict oversight of them."

"All these obligations are either plainly expressed, or are to be inferred from such passages as the following: "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be *just*, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain;" images which join to the attribute of justice a constant and diffusive beneficence. "Mercy and truth preserve the king." "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness thou shalt judge." "He that saith unto the wicked, thou art righteous," that is, acquits the guilty in judgment, "him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him."—"Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men; such as fear God; men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, and let them judge the people at all seasons." "Him that hath a high look and a proud heart I will not suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell in my house, he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." To these and many similar passages in the Old Testament may be added, as so many intimations of the *Divine will* as to rulers, those patriotic and pious practices of such of the judges and kings of Israel as had the express approbation of God; for although they may not apply as particular rules in all cases, they have to all succeeding ages the force of the general principles which are implied in them. The New Testament directions, although expressed generally, are equally comprehensive; and it is worthy of remark, that whilst they assert the Divine ordination of "the powers that be," they explicitly mark out for what *ends* they were thus appointed, and allow, therefore, of no plea of Divine right in rulers for any thing contrary to them."—*Watson's Theological Institutes*, Vol. III. pp. 307, 308.

In proceeding to notice the duties of submission and support to the civil authorities, it may be proper to advert, first, to the *limits*, and, secondly, to the *nature* of these duties. “Let us,” (says the author of the Homilies of the Church of England,) “let us believe undoubtedly, good Christian people, that we may not obey kings, magistrates, or any others, (though they be our own fathers,) if they would command us to do anything contrary to God’s commandments. In such a case we ought to say, with the Apostle, ‘We must rather obey God than man.’”* The eloquent and judicious GIBBORNE thus clearly states the Scriptural doctrine of this subject:—

“The obedience of the subject is immediately due to the existing Government in consequence of its possessing the delegated authority of the State. It is not, however, an obedience without limit: it is not due in any case in which it would be a breach of duty to God; and, in addition to that restriction, it is not due in any instance or degree in which the Governors do not possess authority from the State to require it. The propriety of these exceptions is sufficiently apparent. No one would undertake to vindicate, by an appeal to human jurisdiction, what would be rebellion against the Sovereign of the Universe; nor would any one conceive himself bound to support his lawful rulers in acts of usurpation. The only concern, then, of the subject in these respects, is, to be careful that his practice correspond with his principles. If he were to be required to do what he is seriously convinced would be sinful,—to forsake, for example, the religious worship which he deems most acceptable to his Maker—to concur in illegal acts against a fellow-citizen,—he ought to remember that neither the command of his superiors, nor even the unanimous voice of his countrymen, would justify his obedience.”

“Under these limitations it is the duty of every British subject to obey, with punctuality, promptitude, and cheerfulness, the laws of the land which are actually in force, and all public usages admitted to have the obligatory power of laws. Reason inculcates this duty as the result of his own positive engagement; and her dictates are expressly supported and strengthened by Christianity.

“The Christian Scriptures do not enjoin their followers to adopt any particular form of Government in preference to another: they do not professedly define what circumstances constitute any one a lawful Governor, nor to what extent a lawful Governor has a right to require

* Homily on Obedience.

the obedience of his subjects. These were points altogether foreign to the views and objects of the sacred writers, who leave them to be decided—the first by the voluntary choice of different nations; the second by the rules of natural justice; the last by the general principles of morality and the laws of each particular state.* But in every country, as soon as those fundamental points are adjusted, Christianity interposes her sanctions, and pronounces it to be the duty of every man to obey the lawful commands, and to respect the persons, and pray for the welfare, of the magistrates of the community to which he belongs. ‘Submit yourself for the Lord’s sake,’ sayeth St. Peter, ‘to every ordinance of man’—(to every person whom men have invested with any degree of lawful authority over you)—‘whether it be to the King as supreme, or unto Governors,’ (all subordinate Magistrates) ‘as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well.’ 1 Pet. ii. 13. Those who are thus *ordained by men* to execute the functions of Governors’ are to be obeyed ‘for conscience sake;’ and therefore are said by St. Paul to be *ordained of God*. ‘There is no power but of God;’ every form of lawful government and magistracy is sanctioned by the Almighty: ‘the powers that be are ordained of God;’ even the idolatrous and persecuting Roman power had authority from God to exact obedience from those to whom the Apostle wrote, because their several countries had faithfully and repeatedly engaged to render it; whence St. Paul infers, that ‘whoever resisteth the power,’—whoever withholds just obedience from his lawful rulers,—‘resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation.’” †

“The principle to be collected from the texts above cited” (says Bishop Horne) “is plainly this; that the law of God enjoins obedience to every government settled according to the constitution of the country in which it subsists; and that, even though the governor should be elected by the people; as in lesser matters, a man is free to choose that master into whose service he will enter; but when he is once entered, the Scriptures press upon him from thenceforth the several duties which a servant owes to his master. The members of a corporation choose one from among themselves for their annual Magistrate; but when he is chosen, they are bound to show him the respect and obedience which are due to his office, while he continues in it. Obedience, in short, is enjoined to the Civil Magistrate, under whatever form of government we

* Watson’s Institutes, Vol. III. p. 311

† Gisborne’s Duties of Men, Vol. I. pp. 75–81.

may happen to live ; nor does that obedience extend to the relinquishing those rights which the citizen may legally claim. St. Paul himself, at Philippi, refuses to comply with the directions intimated by the Magistrates, unless the Magistrates themselves will make him amends for the illegality of their proceedings in punishing him uncondemned ; of the Centurion who was standing near, when he was about to be scourged, he demanded the privilege due to a Roman citizen ; and when Festus proposed his trial to be held at Jerusalem, the Apostle boldly made his appeal to Cæsar, as every Roman citizen had a right to do. These claims of civil privileges do not indicate unconditional submission to power illegally exercised, but refer us, for the practice of our duty in particular cases, to the laws and constitution of our country." *

Recent and passing occurrences, and the present occasion, ought to remind us of the several duties which devolve upon us as subjects of government—especially of a free and enlightened one. It is possible that exception may be taken by some to *my* judgment on this subject, as well as to the authority of the Dignitaries whom I have already quoted. I will, therefore, express the advices I deem it my duty to offer, in the language of a Divine whose name challenges the highest human sanction—a Divine whose unrivalled powers were scripturally employed, at one time, in resisting the arbitrary and unconstitutional encroachments of the capricious Charles the First, and were afterwards, upon the same grounds, employed with equal energy in resisting the usurpations of the unprin-

* *Sermons, Vol. III. pp. 115, 116.*—Both the right and duty of exercising the privileges recognized and secured by law, and on some occasions, of even lawfully and constitutionally resisting the measures of a government, are thus forcibly stated by the eloquent Watson: "The lawfulness, nay, even duty of it must often be allowed ; but under certain qualifying circumstances. As, 1. That this resistance of opposing and inculcating opinion is not directed against the government, as such, however strict, provided it be just and impartial. 2. That it is not personal against the supreme magistrate himself, or his delegated authorities, but relates to public acts only. 3. That it springs not from mere theoretical preference of some new form of government to that actually existing, so that it has in it nothing practical. 4. That it proceeds not from a hasty, prejudiced, or malignant interpretation of the character, designs, and acts of a government. 5. That it is not factious ; that is, not the result of attachment to parties, and of zeal to effect mere party objects, instead of the general good. 6. That it does not respect the interests of a few only, or of a part of the community, in the mere local interests of some places in opposition to the just interests of other places. Under such guards as these, the respectful, but firm expression of opinion, by speech, writing, petition, or remonstrance, is not only lawful, but is often an imperative duty, a duty for which hazards even must be run by those who endeavour to lead up public opinion to place itself against real encroachments upon the fundamental laws of a State, or any serious maladministration of its affairs. The same conclusion may be maintained under similar reserves, when the object is to improve a deficient and inadequate state of the supreme government. It is indeed especially requisite here, that the case should be a clear one ; that it should be felt to be so by the great mass of those who with any propriety can be called the *public* ; that it should not be urged beyond the necessity of the case ; that the discussion of it should be temperate ; that the change should be directly connected with an obvious public good, not otherwise to be accomplished. When these circumstances meet, there is manifestly no opposition to government as an ordinance of God ; no blameable resistance "to the powers that be," since it is only proposed to place them in circumstances the more effectually to fulfil the duties of their office ; nothing contrary, in fact, to the original compact, the object of which was the public benefit, by rendering its government as efficient to promote the good of the State as possible, and which therefore necessarily supposed a liability to future modifications, when the fairly collected public sentiment, through the organs by which it usually expresses itself as to the public weal, required it."—*Theological Institutes, Vol. III. pp. 311, 312.*

cipled Cromwell—a Presbyterian Dissenter, whose praise is, and has been for ages, in all the Churches. I need scarcely say, I refer to the Rev. RICHARD BAXTER, best known as the immortal author of the *Reformed Pastor*, and the *Saint's Everlasting Rest*. The following are a few of his advices, the correctness and importance of which will more than justify my introducing them at some length.

1. "Begin with an absolute, universal, resolved obedience to God, your Creator and Redeemer, who is your sovereign King and will be your final righteous Judge. As he who is no loyal subject to the King can never well obey his officers, so he that subjecteth not his soul to the original power of the Creator can never well obey the derivative power of earthly governors. Whatever Satan and his servants may say, and however some hypocrites may contradict in their practices the religion which they profess, yet nothing is more certain, than that the most serious, godly Christians are the best subjects upon earth,—as their principles themselves will demonstrate."

2. "Let no vices of the person cause you to forget the dignity of his office. The authority of a sinful ruler is of God, and must accordingly be obeyed. Those sins which will damn a man's soul, and deprive him of Heaven, will not deprive him of his kingdom or authority, nor disoblige the subjects from their obedience. An infidel or an ungodly Christian (that is, a hypocrite,) is capable of being a ruler, as well as being a parent, husband, master; and the Apostle hath taught all, as well as servants, their duty to such. (1 Pet. ii. 18–21.) Though it be a rare mercy to have godly rulers, and a great judgment to have ungodly ones, it is such as must be borne."

3. "Do not either proclaim or aggravate the vices of your rulers to their dishonour; for this honour is necessary to the public good. If they have not care of their own honour, yet their subjects must have a care of it. If once they be dishonoured, they will the more easily be contemned, hated, and disobeyed. Therefore the dishonouring of the rulers tendeth to the dissolution of the government and ruin of the commonwealth."

4. "Subdue your passions, that no injuries which you may suffer by rulers may disturb your reason, and make you dishonour them by way of revenge. If you may not revenge yourselves on private men, much less on magistrates; and the tongue may be an unjust revenger as well as the hand. Passions will provoke you to tell all men, 'thus and thus I was used,' and to persuade you that it is not sin to tell the truth

of what you suffered ; but remember, that the public good is of greater value than the righting of a personal insult or injury. Many a discontented person hath set kingdoms on fire by proclaiming the faults of governors for the righting of themselves."

5. "Wish not evil to your governors in your secret thoughts ; but if any such fault would enter into your hearts, reject it with abhorrence. 'Curse not the king, no, not in thy thoughts ; curse not the rich in thy bedchamber ; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.' A feverish misguided zeal for religion, and a passionate discontent for personal injuries, do make many greatly guilty in this point. They cherish such thoughts as are pleasing to them, though they dare not utter them in words. And he that dare wish hurt, is in danger of being drawn by temptation to do hurt."

6. "Abhor the popular spirit of envy, which maketh the poor, for the most part, think odiously of the rich and their superiors ; because they have that which they would rather have themselves. I have long observed it, that the labouring people are very apt to speak of the rich as sober men speak of drunkards,—as if their very estates and dignity were a vice ; when yet they themselves would be as rich and great if they knew how to attain it. They think they are the maintainers of the commonwealth, and the rich are the caterpillars of it, that live upon their labours, like drones in the hive, or mice and vermin that eat the honey which the poor labouring bees have long been gathering. For they are unacquainted with the labours and cares of their governors, and sensible only of their own. This envious spirit exceedingly disposeth the labouring people to discontents, and tumults, and rebellions ; but it is not of God."

7. "Keep no company with envious murmurers at government ; for their words fret like a canker, and their sin is of an infecting kind. What a multitude were drawn into the rebellion of Corah, who, no doubt, were provoked by the leaders' discontented words ! It seemeth they were for popularity—'Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them ; wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation ?' What confidence and what fair pretences are here !—so probable and plausible to the people that it is no wonder that multitudes were carried to rebellion by it : though God disowned them by a dreadful judgment, and showed who were the rightful governors of the people."

8. "Pray constantly and heartily for the spiritual and corporeal welfare of your governors. And you have reason to believe that God who hath commanded you to put up such prayers, will not suffer them to be wholly lost, but will answer them some way to the benefit of them that perform the duty. And the very performance of it will do us much good of itself; for it will keep the heart well disposed to our governors, and keep out all sinful desires of their hurt; or control them and cast them out, if they come in: Prayer is the exercise of love and good desire; and exercise increaseth and confirmeth habits. If any ill wishes against your rulers should steal into your minds, the next time you pray for them, conscience will accuse you of hypocrisy, and either the sinful desires will corrupt or end your prayers, or else your prayers will cast out those ill desires. Certainly the faithful fervent prayers of the righteous do prevail much with God; and things would go better than they do in the world, if we prayed for rulers as heartily as we ought."

9. "When you are tempted to dishonourable thoughts of your governors, look over the face of all the earth, and compare your case with the nations of the world; and then your murmurings may be turned into thankfulness for so great a mercy. What cause hath God to difference us from other nations, and give us any more than an equal proportion of mercy to the rest of the world? How happy were the world, if it were so with all nations, as it is with us! Remember how unthankfulness forfeiteth our happiness."

10. "Think not that any change of the form of government, would cure that which is caused by men's sins in general, or the common depravity of human nature. Some think they can contrive such forms of government, as that rulers shall be able to do no hurt; but either they will disable them to do good, or else their engine is but glass, and will fail or break when it comes to execution. Men that are themselves so bad and unhumbled, as not to know how bad they are, and how bad mankind is, are still laying the blame upon the form of government when any thing is amiss, and think by a change to find a cure. As if when an army is infected with the plague, or composed of cowards, the change of the General, or form of government, would prove a cure. But if a monarchy be faulty, in an aristocracy you will but have many faulty governors for one; and in a democracy, a multitude of tyrants."

11. "Take heed of mistaking the nature of that liberty of the people, which is truly valuable and desirable, and of contending for an undesirable liberty in its stead. It is desirable to have liberty to do good, and to

possess our own, and enjoy God's mercies, and live in peace ; but it is not desirable to have liberty to sin, and abuse one another, and hinder the gospel, and contemn our Governors. Some mistake liberty for government itself ; and some mistake liberty for an exemption from government, and think they are most free, when they are most ungoverned, and may do what they list ; but this is a misery, and not a mercy, and therefore was never purchased for us by Christ.

12. "Be ready to your power to defend your Governors against all Treasons, Conspiracies, and Rebellions. For this is a great part of the duty of your relation. The wisdom and goodness necessary to government is much personal in the Governors themselves ; but the strength (without which laws cannot be executed, nor the people preserved) is in the people. Therefore, if you withdraw your help in time of need, you desert and betray your rulers, whom you should defend.

13. "Murmur not at the payment of those necessary tributes, by which the common safety must be preserved. Sordid covetousness hath been the ruin of many a commonwealth. When every one is shifting for himself, and saving his own, and murmuring at the charge by which their safety must be defended,—this selfishness is the most pernicious enemy to the government and the common good. Tribute and honour must be paid to whom it doth belong. For 'they are God's Ministers, attending continually on this very thing.' And none of your goods or cabins will be saved, if by your covetousness the ship should perish."*

II. Let us now proceed to consider *the wicked and formidable conspiracy from which we have escaped, and mark the signs and tokens of providential interposition in our deliverance.*

To attribute every trifling occurrence that happens to such a special interposition of Providence as excludes or controls the agency of natural causes, would be levity. Every object in nature, from an atom to the universe, is under the control of certain, uniform, fixed laws, commonly called the *laws of nature*, but termed by the Psalmist, "*the ordinances of heaven.*" There are established courses of administration, and uniform laws in the government of men as well as in the works of nature ; yet these very laws of nature are God himself in operation—are Divine intelligence, will, feeling, wisdom, benevolence, in action. But there are occasions in which, independent of and above these laws, the opera-

* Baxter's Christian Politics, Works, Vol. VI.

tions of his power and goodness are so manifest, that, though we may not regard them as strictly miraculous, reason and gratitude demand the acknowledgment, that it is the "Lord's doings, and it is marvellous in our eyes." In such instances his hand is not concealed by the veil of second causes, but appears in the majesty of its own righteousness and omnipotence, spreading or restraining the impulses of his power, working in judgment and mercy, prolonging or shortening the dispensations of his vengeance and compassion, according to the counsels of his own will, and as shall best accomplish the final results of his government over human beings. In the Scripture histories, the obscurity spread over the workings of Providence is removed, and we are enabled, behind the scenes of natural agencies, to behold the operations of his wisdom and the wonders of his power. There the lights of heaven—the elements of nature—objects animate and inanimate—beings visible and invisible—are seen employed as instruments in accomplishing the purposes of Him who "ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he pleaseth." Thus the stars in their courses fought against Sisera; the Lord thundered upon the Philistines and discomfited them; he caused the hosts of Syrians to hear the noise of chariots, and horses, and a great multitude; he made the children of Ammon and Moab destroy one another; he smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000 men in one night; under his direction, one chases a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight; a stripling, with nothing more than a sling and pebble, destroys a mighty giant armed from head to foot; the cunning schemes of wordly and treacherous politicians, such as Abimelech and Abithophel, and many others, are suddenly baffled and blasted, and the mischief intended falls upon the heads of those who intended it; plots contrived in darkness, with all possible caution and secrecy, are, by improbable means, and by unaccountable accidents, brought to light, and towns, and cities, and provinces, and kingdoms, are delivered from meditated destruction.

In such events it becomes us "*wisely to consider of his doings.*" And if we advert to the treasonable conspiracy from which we have been delivered—the importance and manner of our deliverance—we cannot but acknowledge, with adoring gratitude, that the Lord still "breaketh the arm of the wicked, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty; disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise; and is known by the judgment that he executeth, when the wicked are snared by the work of their own hands."

The conspiracy itself exhibits several characters of deep and deliberate wickedness.

1. *It was in direct violation of the avowed and oft repeated professions of its authors.* On a thousand occasions, and in a thousand forms of speech, have the authors of this conspiracy disclaimed any intention or wish to subvert the established charter of our civil rights—to throw off the government of our rightful Sovereign—or to invade the rights and property of their fellow subjects; and they and their adherents have been wont to attribute the worst motives to any one who presumed to ascribe to them such ulterior designs, or dared to intimate that such results were involved in the principles they avowed and the measures they advocated. Yet, in the face of these denials and professions, have they plotted treason against their Sovereign—rebellion against the laws—murder and robbery against their fellow subjects! My brethren, apart from the inhuman plot itself and the deception and falsehood by which it was concealed and promoted, what would be the consequence if its authors' own personal example of the crucifixion of truth and veracity were to be imitated by those whom they would govern? The very bond which cements society together would be dissolved; the only foundation of confidence and intercourse between man and man would be destroyed; transactions of trade and commerce, social compacts and agreements, would be annihilated; social happiness would be banished from the community; every mind would become the seat of terror and suspense; and universal anarchy, desolation, and misery, would ensue.

2. *This conspiracy involved a violation of the Oath of Allegiance;* in which we (to use the words of the oath) “DO SINCERELY PROMISE AND SWEAR” [or affirm, as the case may be] “THAT WE WILL BE FAITHFUL, AND BEAR TRUE ALLEGIANCE TO HER [OR HIS] MAJESTY.” My friends, oaths are solemn things, in both a moral and civil view. We have nothing higher to trust to in human transactions than a man's oath; all legal adjudications, which govern and affect every right and interest on this side of the grave, necessarily proceed and depend upon the inviolableness of oaths. Now, the oath of allegiance must mean something; it cannot leave us at liberty to support or oppose the established constitution, or form of government, according to our fancy or pleasure; nor to adopt a new form of government, and pursue such measures as feeling and party may dictate in order to accomplish our schemes. To say the least, the oath of allegiance involves the four following things: 1. “It excludes all intention to support the claim or pretensions of any other person or persons to the government than the

reigning Sovereign." 2. "It excludes the design of attempting to subvert the authority of the reigning Sovereign for any reason whatever." 3. "It forbids the taking up of arms against the government of the reigning Sovereign, with views of private advancement, or from any motives of personal resentment or dislike."* 4. It includes a solemn engagement, in the sight of God and man, to support the authority of the reigning Sovereign as established by law, both by disclosing all conspiracies against it, and maintaining it against all invasions, whether foreign or domestic. Such is the obvious import of the oath of allegiance. Yet, with this oath upon their hearts, and the tacit, social and moral obligations which rest upon every member of a civil compact, have the authors of the present conspiracy plotted the subversion of the Sovereign power; and have therefore, to the example and guilt of other crimes, added that of *perjury*, which, in its general consequence, strikes at the security of reputation, property, and even life itself.

3. *This conspiracy was at variance with every principle of free and enlightened government.*—Whatever might be the views of many inhabitants of this Province in regard to particular acts and measures of the present administration,—however earnestly and generally they might desire the adoption of several remedial measures for the religious, educational, and general improvement of the country,—not even an appeal was ever made to them for the avowed purpose of dissolving the existing connexion between Canada and Great Britain; much less a declared determination for the attainment of that object on the part of any portion of our Canadian fellow-subjects, notwithstanding the acknowledged right and fully-enjoyed privilege of the free expression of opinion, by speech, writing, petition, and remonstrance, in all their conceivable varieties. The avowal of such a project on the part of its instigators was *news to the public*, instead of being the *voice of the public*. It was the midnight plotting and lawless aggression of a few hundred—a few thousand, at most, by their own showing—against the constitution voluntarily accepted, and the laws voluntarily adopted by the inhabitants of the Province; and was, therefore, a conspiracy against the government of law—the safeguard of life, liberty, and property—and a conspiracy against the government of the majority; and, had it been successful, it would have furnished a precedent for any banditti of adventurous plunderers, in all time to come, and whether consisting of many or few, to invade the peace, property, and lives of the industrious and enterprising inhabitants of the land, as well as to discard, at pleasure, every obligation of truth and morality.

* Paley.

4. This conspiracy was, in the fourth place, *a secret plot of robbery and murder against the property and lives of peaceable British subjects.* By the avowal of its authors we are assured they expected to possess themselves of property which had been acquired by the persevering labours and enterprise of others. Here was robbery of the blackest character. By their acts, as well as by the confession of certain of the party that have been apprehended, we are warranted in the belief that the destruction of at least a number of individuals was intended. Here was causeless murder, and with the most deliberate malice of forethought. And upon what ground have these deeds of almost incredible barbarity been meditated? Because we are oppressively *taxed*?—when taxes are of necessity levied upon every civilized country for the maintenance of the government, the administration of the laws, and the defence of the public, and when our taxes are self-imposed and at least fifty per cent less than those of our American neighbours are! Because of our *laws*?—when every law in force in this country has been either adopted or enacted by the three branches of our own domestic Legislature, as much as the laws of the State of New York have been adopted by its Legislature! Except, indeed, two or three acts relating to our commercial intercourse with other nations—a control which the American Congress itself possesses and exercises in respect to every State in the Union. Was it because we are proscribed or interfered with in our religious worship and privileges? The gloom of such a dark day has passed away; and however desirous we are of improved regulations in matters affecting the religious interests of the Province, the power to adjust all matters of this kind is not only invested in our own Legislature, but the adjustment of these matters for the peace and welfare of the country, has been expressly referred to the Provincial Parliament by the Imperial Government. What then is this plot against our lives, and families, and possessions, but the offspring of ambition and cupidity, aided by ignorance—forcibly illustrating the nervous remarks of the Author of the Homilies of the Church of England, that, “Ambition and desire to be aloft, which is the property of pride, stirreth up men’s minds to rebellion, so cometh it of a Luciferian pride and presumption, that a few rebellious subjects should set themselves up against the majesty of the prince, against the wisdom of the counsellors, and against the power and force of all the faithful subjects and people throughout the whole realm. As for envy, wrath, murder, and desire of blood, and covetousness of other men’s goods, lands, and livings, they are the inseparable accidents of all rebels, and peculiar properties that do usually stir up wicked men unto rebellion.”—“The restless ambitious having once determined by one means or other to achieve their intended

purpose, when they cannot by lawful and peaceable means climb so high as they do desire, they attempt the same by force and violence ; wherein when they cannot prevail against the ordinary authority and power of lawful princes and governors themselves alone, they do seek the aid and help of the ignorant multitude, abusing them to their own purpose." (11)

5. Our fifth and last remark is, that it was a conspiracy, which, had it not been crushed in the bud, *must have inevitably involved our country in all the horrors of a civil war.* Of all wars, a war among the subjects of the same government, and the inhabitants of the same country, is the most appalling in its character, and the most ruinous in its consequences. It infuses through the whole mass of society the poison of mutual distrust, jealousy, hatred and resentment ; it extends its withering influence to the remotest parts of the community, and insinuates its corrosive effects into all the enjoyments of life. It arms neighbour against neighbour, and brother against brother ; parents against children, and children against parents ; and, in its wide-spread desolations, defaces the beauty, wastes the strength, and destroys the entire framework of the body politic, and transforms the most verdant and prosperous country into one great Aceldama—the field of blood. Under the blighting influence of such a war, the arts and sciences languish, and trade and commerce decline ; the wealth and resources of a people are consumed, and their might and influence among neighbouring powers are lost ; the regular course of justice is obstructed, and its principles are subverted ; the laws—those sacred fences of society—are thrown down ; the avenues to fraud, oppression, and rapine, are opened wide ; and that subordination among mankind which is of the last consequence to their happiness, welfare, and safety, is destroyed.

Such, my friends, is the threatened calamity—such the scenes of blood, and desolation, and misery, from which we have experienced a happy deliverance ;—a deliverance marked by the manifest interposition of the Divine hand, from the beginning to the end. The time I have already trespassed upon your kind attention admonishes me against enlargement or even comment on this part of the subject. Nor indeed is either necessary. The facts are trumpet-tongued ; and with the brief mention of them I will content myself on the present occasion.

The metropolis was defenceless ;—there was not, I believe, an armed man in it. Every part of it, except the Market-buildings and the Upper Canada Bank, remained defenceless for more than twelve hours after the assembling of the insurgents within five miles of it. The insurgents amounted to several hundred. The deliberation and counsel

(11) *Homily against Wilful Rebellion.*

of several weeks, if not months, had familiarised their minds with the enterprise. They were armed; they were desperate; they were confident. Defeat was ruin; success was power, and plunder, and booty.—How eventful the alternative! An attack against the city was resolved upon; the hour was fixed; the march was commenced; the prospect of success, by the subsequent confession of all parties, was certain.—But there is a God that ruleth over all, and works both with and without the agency of natural causes.—At this critical juncture an important life is taken away;—the selected leader of the band—a man of extraordinary personal courage and some military experience,—is thrown from his horse and his neck broken. The plot is discovered to the City; and the bells ring an alarm. The forces of the insurgents advance within a mile of the City, and halt. In the space of five minutes, as I have been credibly informed, a change is visible in their countenances; they pause; they hesitate; they doubt; they fear, “*where no fear was;*” they fall back; they are undone! Thenceforth common prudence seems to have forsaken them in their counsels, and confusion, and disappointment, and ruin follow in rapid succession. “*There are many devices in man’s heart; but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.*”—On the other hand, the town soon becomes a “defenced city”—environed with hearts that love their families, their liberties, their country; the winds and the waves aid in the accession of kindred spirits from other parts of the Province; the howling tempests of December are but the gentle zephyrs of Midsummer until the country is safe, and “ALL IS WELL!”—“Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us over for a prey unto their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped.”*

Let us then “*wisely consider of his doing;*” and to Him let us ceaselessly offer the incense of praise and confidence, of love and obedience.

As to the future, whatever may be the real or imaginary rumbling in the distant horizon, in the use of the ordinary prudential means, we may say to every timid and agitated Manoah, in the language of his pious and courageous wife—“*If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have showed us these things.*” † “Allelujah! Salvation, and glory, and power unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments. Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints! Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen!” ‡

* Psalm cxxiv.

† Judges xiii. 23.

‡ Psalm lxxii.



